**Civil War: Face Jug**

**Materials**

Pen, paper, computer, PowerPoint software, Internet, [Detective Technique Guide: Conducting Historical Research](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/going-back-in-time/), [Detective Technique Guide: Examining Artwork](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/1000-words/)   
  
**Related Episode**

A ceramic jug found in Germantown, PA turns out to be an example of a significant 19th century protective relic and piece of art — a face jug — created by African American slaves and freedmen in the Edgefield District of South Carolina.

**Video:**  
*Face Jug*  
  
What does this ceramic face reveal about a captive people's search for identity?

**Estimated Time Required**  
  
2-3 class periods   
  
**Grades**  
  
6-12  
  
**Objective**

In this lesson, students research the face jug, a 19th century art form that formed a bridge between African American freedmen and their African pasts. They then create four panel comics that depict their historical and contemporary significance.   
  
**Before Viewing**

Ask students to brainstorm a list of good luck objects, totems, or symbols in different cultures. Write their list of objects on the board and have students discuss the symbolic and literal value of these objects.   
  
Alternatively, you might wish to share the following items from this list of good luck signs from around the world with students and ask students to discuss the significance of each one:

* Dreamcatcher
* Red lantern
* Horsheshoe
* Coins
* Evil eye amulet

Tell students they are going to watch an episode of History Detectives which is about an object that had deep cultural significance to African Americans in the 19th century.   
  
**Activity**

After they have watched the History Detectives episode, “Face Jug”, tell students that they are going to be investigating the face jug, a type of 19th century pottery created by African American slaves and freedmen in the Edgefield District of South Carolina. [Share this PowerPoint presentation about face jugs](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fteacherweb.com%2FFL%2FBuckLakeElementarySchool%2FArt%2FFaceJugsrevised_short.ppt&rct=j&q=face%20jug%20powerpoint&ei=cfpgTuy6BunI0AGH6qEq&usg=AFQjCNGqxSDoGW1qHNBKRfjbQuVp6oPFlg&sig2=X7dlvD2_c2MW7y04ueTi9g&cad=rja) with your students. It provides useful background information about and visual examples of South Carolina face jugs.   
  
Divide students into groups of three or four. Each group will research an aspect of the face jug, then create a four panel comic strip collage about it using words, illustrations, and images of face jugs.

**Option 1: Dave the Slave**  
  
One of the best known face jug potters from the Edgefield District was a man named “Dave.” His pots and jugs were immense in size and notable for their handwritten inscriptions, which were often couplets. Ask students to research his significance and relevance using the [Detective Technique Guide: Conducting Historical Research](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/going-back-in-time/) and the following resources:

* [Dave the Potter](http://www.usca.edu/aasc/davepotter.htm) – a biographical article
* [Dave the Slave](http://www.davetheslave.org) – a website which features his work and examples of his writing.
* [Edgefield Pottery District](http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/Edgefield/) – a compilation of research sites from the University of Illinois

After completing their research, students should complete this [graphic organizer reflection sheet](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/unit_reflection_sheet.pdf) which invites them to consider the relevance of this art form in the context of their lives. (This part of the activity will involve about 15-30 minutes of discussion time.)   
  
Finally, they should create a four panel comic about Dave the Potter’s life and work using [this template](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/four_panel_jamcomic.pdf) created by Jeff Sharp, an educator and member of Maryland's Comic Book Initiative. Encourage them to use his couplets and inscriptions in the comic book text to tell a story as well as to include images of his jugs and any illustrations they find of his likeness.

**Option Two: Contemporary Face Jugs**  
  
Tell students that several contemporary artists still create face jugs, either as an expression of their connection to their ancestry or as a decorative folk art using the original methods.   
  
Invite them to research one of the following artists and if possible, to interview them using Detective Technique Guide: Examining Artwork:

* [Jim McDowell](http://www.blackpotter.com/), an African American potter who creates face jugs inspired by Dave the Potter.
* Steven Ferrell, owner of Old Edgefield Pottery and Smithsonian consultant. See related [Augusta Chronicle news article](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/09/02/met_546619.shtml) and [Vimeo](http://vimeo.com/2495030) video.
* [Gary Dexter](http://madpotter-oldcanalpottery.blogspot.com/), potter who was featured in History Detectives.

After completing their research, students should complete this [graphic organizer reflection sheet](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/unit_reflection_sheet.pdf) which invites them to consider the relevance of this art form in the context of their lives. (This part of the activity will involve about 15-30 minutes of discussion time.)   
  
Finally, they should work together to create a four panel comic titled “Why I Make Face Jugs,” “A Day in an Artist’s Life” or “Artist’s Statement” about the artist they’ve researched. They should use [this template](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/four_panel_jamcomic.pdf%20) created by Jeff Sharp, an educator and member of Maryland's Comic Book Initiative. Encourage students to use quotes from their research or interviews in the comic book text to convey the artist’s creative goals, and to cut and paste images of face jugs and of the artists in the comic panels.   
  
When students have completed their research and created their comic panels, display them in the classroom and invite each group to make an oral presentation about their research and comic story. The resulting comics, which look like graphic collages, will allow students to visually examine the styles and ranges of face jugs that have been created.

**Ask:**

What did you discover through your research that surprised you? How is the face jug an important aspect of African American culture? How have they evolved and stayed the same? What is the value of preserving the method of making the face jug?

**Going Further**  
  
Have students select an artifact or object that represents good luck in their family because it represents a direct connection to their past. Have them conduct an interview with the owner(s) of this object, then transcribe and edit it into a 250-300 word oral history. Create a classroom blog using [blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) where students can post and share a photograph of the object along with the oral histories.

**Related Resources**

[Edgefield Pottery](http://www.edgefieldpottery.org/)

[Encyclopedia Smithsonian: American Face Vessels](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmah/facevess.htm)

[Video: Steve Ferrell of Old Edgefield Potter recounts the life of Dave the Potter](http://vimeo.com/2495030)

[Teaching with Comics Resource Page](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/) which also includes a comic evaluation rubric

[Philadelphia Inquirer: A “face jug” sparks big excitement](http://www.philly.com/philly/living/20100328_A__quot_face_jug_quot__sparks_big_excitement.html)

[Antique Roadshow: Lanier Meaders Face Jug appraisal](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/200701A28.html)

**McRel Standards**

* Visual Arts, Standard 4: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
* Historical Understanding, Standard 1: Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
* Historical Understanding, Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective
* United States History, Standard 12: Understands the sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period
* World History, Standard 29: Understands the economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas between 1500 and 1750
* Language Arts, Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes
* Language Arts, Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

## Going Back In Time

**How to Conduct Historical Research**

Imagine that you have selected an object, but have no clues and no living witnesses to solve your history mystery. What then? Don’t give up hope. Here’s when thinking like a detective can come in handy. Your ability to dig for and find historically faithful documents from the past will help you with your investigation. Here are some tips to help you along.

**Getting Started**

When our history detectives are in search of leads to find old documents, they:

* Inspect bibliographies and footnotes for clues, then follow the paper trails back to primary sources to help them find out what really happened and why.
* Seek out original work connected to both the time and event: a photograph, diary, letter, artifact, map, business file, or court docket.
* Don't overlook any unusual records (e.g. ship manifests) that can help support their case.
* Learn to distinguish between credible and original sources and second-hand information that could be biased or misleading.

##### **Watch Our History Detectives at Work**

**Iwo Jima**

History Detective Eduardo Pagan conducts background research learn more about a long-forgotten map of the Japanese island of Iwo Jima that belonged to a WWII soldier.

**Spybook**

History detective Gwendolyn Wright examines an old notebook to determine whether it is really a spy’s notebook.

##### **Do It Yourself**

You too can dig up valuable information through historical research. Just follow these four steps to get started.

**Step One: Understand the Context**

Before you investigate an object or a subject, identify the time or place from which it came. If you are not sure, make a list of possibilities. Then, learn about the time and place where this object was used or created. What historical events were occurring? What was life like?

Try creating a parallel timeline ([see an example here](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/static/media/downloads/2011-05-26/Timeline.pdf)) where you map out the historical events of the time with the key events surrounding the object, person, or event you are investigating. Your main research will have more meaning if you do this.

**Step Two: Know Where to Look**

Ask yourself who else would have an interest in your research subject and create a list of expert sources. Your list should include librarians and local experts, as well as the Internet and the local phonebook. (See our [Detective Technique Guide: How to Find an Expert](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/who-knows-best/) for more.)

The following websites can help guide your research:

[American Library Association: Using Primary Sources on the Web](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/history/resources/pubs/usingprimarysources/index.cfm)  
A guide to finding and using primary sources on the Web

[The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Collection](http://gilderlehrman.org/collection/index.html)  
A collection of primary documents and exhibits, with special focus on the Revolutionary, Antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods.

[Constitution.org](http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/primarysources.html)  
A collection of primary source documents pertaining to early American history.

[100 Milestone Documents](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/)  
A collection of 100 documents that chronicle United States history from 1776 to 1965.

[Repository of Primary Sources](http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html)  
A listing of over 5000 websites describing holdings of manuscripts, archives, rare books, historical photographs, and other primary sources from the United States and around the world, compiled by the University of Idaho.

**Step Three: Consider the Quality**

The best and most reliable historical documents always are primary sources. A primary source is an object or document that was created during the time period that is being studied and provides a first-hand account of the event, object, or practice that you are researching. It could be a letter, legal and financial record, eyewitness report, diary, a photograph, jewelry, or a newspaper article.

Only turn to secondary sources when it's absolutely necessary. These are documents that were created about the historical period that you are studying after that specific time. They include scholarly articles, encyclopedias, and text books, for example.

**Step Four: Become Sherlock Holmes**

You must quickly size up the quality of information, and cross-examine your sources. Keep the following questions in mind when reading your sources:

* Who is the author and what is his/her place in society? Did the author have a hidden motive?
* What is the document’s argument? How does it make its case?
* Who is the audience for this text?
* How does this text compare to and either support or dispute the information you’ve found in secondary sources?
* What kind of information does this document tell you without knowing it’s telling you?
* Where are the holes in the story?
* Is it really evidence, or just a [red herring](http://pbskids.org/historydetectives/parentsteachers/lesson_1.html)?
* What can I know of the past based on this source? How does it shed light on my investigation?

Now, it’s your turn. Print and use our [handy checklist for conducting historical research and finding historical documents](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/static/media/downloads/2011-05-26/checklist_research.pdf) to help you. Ready, Set, Go!...

##### **PS: Some Parting Tips from the History Detective Experts**

* Don't let the source intimidate you. [The Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/) and the [National Archives](http://www.archives.org/) have billions of records. But they are a lot like your local library, with librarians on site and online. Start by inspecting bibliographies and footnotes for clues, and then follow the paper trails back to primary sources.
* If you accept material from a biased source (e.g., the Internet, cable news, your 6th cousin) do not mix that material with your other research unless, and until, you track each fact to the primary source. How do you recognize bias? Ask yourself:
* Does this author have an agenda or specific leaning? Does he or she examine the issue from primarily one point of view?
* Is there an argument that is being made which overlooks the other side’s position?
* Avoid dubious secondary sources (textbooks, articles, encyclopedias). They recycle previously used material, and can perpetuate falsehoods.

**1000 Words**

**How to Examine Art and Photographs**

You’ve heard the expression, “A picture is worth 1,000 words.” We use it when talking about all kinds of objects of art, whether they are photographs, paintings, sculptures, or even, pieces of pottery. But how do you know whether a photo or artwork is genuine Old Master or a fake? Here’s how to take a closer look and find out the truth.

**Getting Started**

When our history detectives come face to face with a work of art, they:

* Examine its physical attributes for any sign of provenance. (That’s just a fancy term for a signature, studio imprint, copyright, or title.)
* Use basic scientific analysis (e.g. UV light, a magnifying glass) to look for alterations.
* Research the era the work might have come from.
* Learn more about the artist or photographer and compare the piece to his or her body of work.
* Consult with experts who can shed light on the artwork and its place in history.

**Watch Our History Detectives at Work**

**Copperhead Cane**

History Detective Wes Cowan appraises a wooden cane topped with a coiled snake made of bronze or copper.

**Baker’s Gold**

History Detective Wes Cowan appraises a drawing of the Gold Rush and tries to determine whether it is by the Gold

Rush photographer I.W. Baker

**Do It Yourself Investigation**

Whether you find a photo or artwork in the attic or at a rummage sale, how do you know what you have? You don’t have to be an expert to undertake a basic investigation. Just follow these steps to get started.

**Step One: Date the Object**

Begin with an objective study of the physical attributes. Write down what you see. Consider the size of the photograph, painting, sculpture, or artwork, the coloring, the frame or border (if any). Look for any sign of provenance. For example, if you are dealing with a photograph, try to identify what era it came from.

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**Daguerreotype 1839-1860**  
A piece of writing paper placed in front of the surface will be reflected in reverse. They often are tarnished around the edges.

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**Ambrotype 1854-1865**

If you take an ambrotype out of the case and hold it up to the light, you should be able to see through it, as it was printed on glass. Often, black paint on the back of the photo has begun to peel or crack.

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**Tintype 1856-1920**

Also called a "ferrotype" or "melainotype," a quick way to tell if a tintype is real is if a magnet will be attracted to it.

**Step Two: Seek Details**

If the object came to you through family channels, record the known history: Where was it purchased? For how much? Write down any interesting stories about how it was acquired.

If you have a piece with provenance (find out more about provenance in the [glossary](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/technique/glossary/) and this [video](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/1479764551)), take the name of the photographer or artist to a local library or do a search online. Are there primary source citations from the period, linking the photograph to the time and/or subject?

If it's a print or other reproduction, when did the original appear? Where is it? What can you learn about it? If it's a numbered print, is it within the documented range of recorded prints?

The following websites can be helpful starting points:

Smithsonian Museums Research Center  
<http://www.si.edu/research/>

Watson: Metropolitan Museum of Art Online Database  
<http://library.metmuseum.org/screens/opacmenu.html>

Civil War Art Collection  
<http://www.sonofthesouth.net/products.htm>

British Museum Online Database  
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx>

National Gallery of Art  
<http://www.nga.gov/collection/index.shtm>

**Step Three: Research the Artist**

Was the alleged photographer or artist known? If so you're really lucky, you may find information on auctions or sales of that photographer’s work. You may also want to take the image (or a good copy) of the work to a public or university library. Ask the librarian for resources and reference works that could help you learn more. For example, if the piece includes a signature or initials, ask to see a dictionary of artist signatures. You might also want to compare the art work to the artist’s body of work.

If you’re researching a well-known artist, [Artnet](http://www.artnet.com/library/) has a comprehensive listing of artist biographies, with samples and timelines of their work. This can be helpful if your are researching a well-known artist. Want to learn more about a local photographer? [Craig's Daguerrian Registry](http://www.craigcamera.com/dag) has lists of many American photographers from 1850-1960. Or, if you’re more interested in art from a certain period or movement, try [Art Promote](http://www.artpromote.com/period.shtml) or [Art Movements](http://www.artmovements.co.uk/home.htm).